



# Arizona Department of Agriculture

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## ***MEDIA ADVISORY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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### **Arizona Initiates Animal Identification Program – Worth \$3 Million**

(Phoenix) -- "To individually number all flocks could be a good thing, but it's tough to find an ear on a chicken," says Clint Hickman of Hickman's Egg Ranch, but The Arizona Department of Agriculture is actively working with New Mexico, Colorado, the Navajo nation and Hopi tribe, through a \$3.55 million program, that will create a premise I.D. for chickens and shrimp farms and animal I.D. for nearly every animal in Arizona, including cattle, camels and llamas. This even applies to 4-H animals and backyard livestock.



This is one more step in protecting Arizonans food supply because should anything ever be found, the Arizona Department of Agriculture will be able to trace a potential threat back to the animal within 48 hours. In addition, such programs ensure the following.

- Foreign Animal Disease control, surveillance, and prevention
- Biosecurity protection of the national herd
- Identification of livestock vaccinated or tested under official disease control or eradication program
- Official identification of animals in interstate or international commerce
- Accurate identification of blood and tissue specimens
- Improvement of laboratory diagnostic and reporting capabilities
- Health status certification of herds, States, and Regions
- Effective regionalization and risk assessment in support of international trade

Many producers are concerned about privacy and as a result, a third company will be keeping all the data and only will the Chief State Veterinarian will have access to the data on an as-needed basis.

This program is voluntary and the Department is trying to have 20 percent state-wide compliance by the end of this year. "We would much rather have it voluntary, than have to force the producers to comply," says Don Butler, Director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture. "Eventually, it will be mandatory."

Each premise will be given a number and/or each animal will receive a tag, which will be either embedded or attached to the animal, costs \$3, but the Arizona Department of Agriculture will be picking up the tab during the voluntary period as an incentive. This is one of many preliminary programs around

the nation and the data will eventually be put in a national database when the program becomes mandatory. No date for mandatory compliance has been established. ###